

JUL- 8-02 MON 2:36 PM ELK RIVER LAW OFFICE

FAX NO. 406 255 525



Project Telephone Company

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Chairman Clifford Bird-In-Ground
Crow Tribe
P.O. Box 159
Crow Agency, MT 59022

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Dear Mr. Chairman:

A letter with the Crow Tribal Council Letterhead was recently submitted to the FCC by Western Wireless. The letter states that the Crow tribe supports Western Wireless' application for ETC status on the Crow Reservation and calls for the FCC to immediately grant that status. We do not know whether the letter is genuine or not, but we wanted to let you know the situation for our perspective.

If Western Wireless is granted ETC status, the ability of Project Telephone Company to continue to offer service to the Crow Reservation will be severely threatened. As you may be aware, telephone service to the reservation has improved dramatically since Project purchased US WEST's facilities about eight years ago. Only about 50% of reservation households had phone service then. That number is around 85% today. We have installed many miles of fiber optic cable on the reservation. We have changed US WEST's terrible construction policy so that now any home or business within one mile of one of our lines can get service with no construction charges. We have made dial-up Internet access available to every customer. We have also made very high-speed Internet access over DSL available in Crow Agency and Fort Smith (Qwest does not even offer DSL in Billings or Great Falls).

We pay nearly \$60,000 per year in taxes on our lines to the tribe. If we can no longer provide service, those revenues will no longer be available to the tribe. We employ Crow Indians to build and maintain our lines and to provide customer service. Since wireless service has no lines, no employees will be needed to maintain them if Western Wireless takes over. Further, our belief is that Western Wireless will perform most of its communications functions outside the reservation. The Crow should also be aware that Western Wireless' financial situation has been very poor for over a year now. Their stock has declined from more than \$70 per share to around \$3 per share. Western Wireless' business operations lost nearly \$100 million over the most recent three-month period, and many analysts predict that their losses will be even greater in this quarter. If Project cannot provide service and Western Wireless is unable to meet its financial commitments, the Crow will be in a very difficult position.

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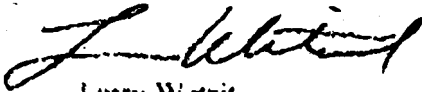
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We have changed our local calling area so that beginning August 14, residents of the reservation can call other communities on the reservation as well as all of the communities in the Billings area without paying long distance charges. We have also made service available for \$1 per month to 500 low-income families on the reservation.

We provided support for numerous activities on the reservation including youth athletics, roping events, elder banquet, pow-wows, school activities and the Crow Fair through donations. We have a local office open daily for the convenience of the Crow Tribal membership. We have a member of the Crow Tribe on the Board of Directors for Project Telephone Company. For these reasons, it is extremely important that the FCC know for certain that the Crow do not support Western Wireless' ETC application at this time.

Our Crow employees are proud of work they perform in their communities. If the Tribe or your members have concerns about the local telephone service or suggests for improvement, we would like to discuss them with you. Please feel free to call me at 800-275-6004 to set up a time to discuss your telephone services.

Respectfully



Larry Wetsit
Customer Affairs Manager

Cc. R. Thronson, Manager
R. Gay, Supervisor